

Worcester City Secondary School

Engagement 2021

Key results and findings

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Introduction

In May 2021 Worcestershire Children First (WCF) and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) published an engagement survey to obtain the views of parents, residents, and young people of Worcester City and surrounding areas. The aim was to gauge opinion about what is important in the delivery of a new secondary school for Worcester.

The engagement exercise was designed so that stakeholders' views could be considered at the very start of the project, ensuring the vision and parameters of the design and specification drew on the opinions and expectations of those who would be directly impacted by the scheme.

Thank you

We want to thank all 595 people who took the time to respond to the survey, their contribution is invaluable. Alongside engagement in the questions, 499 individual comments were also submitted as part of this survey. We want everyone to know that colleagues across WCF and WCC involved in this project are using the results to guide the creation of the proposal for a new school and inform their decisions about the project, as outlined below.

The results have provided invaluable insight into what is important to stakeholders and will enable us to develop a proposal to consult on.

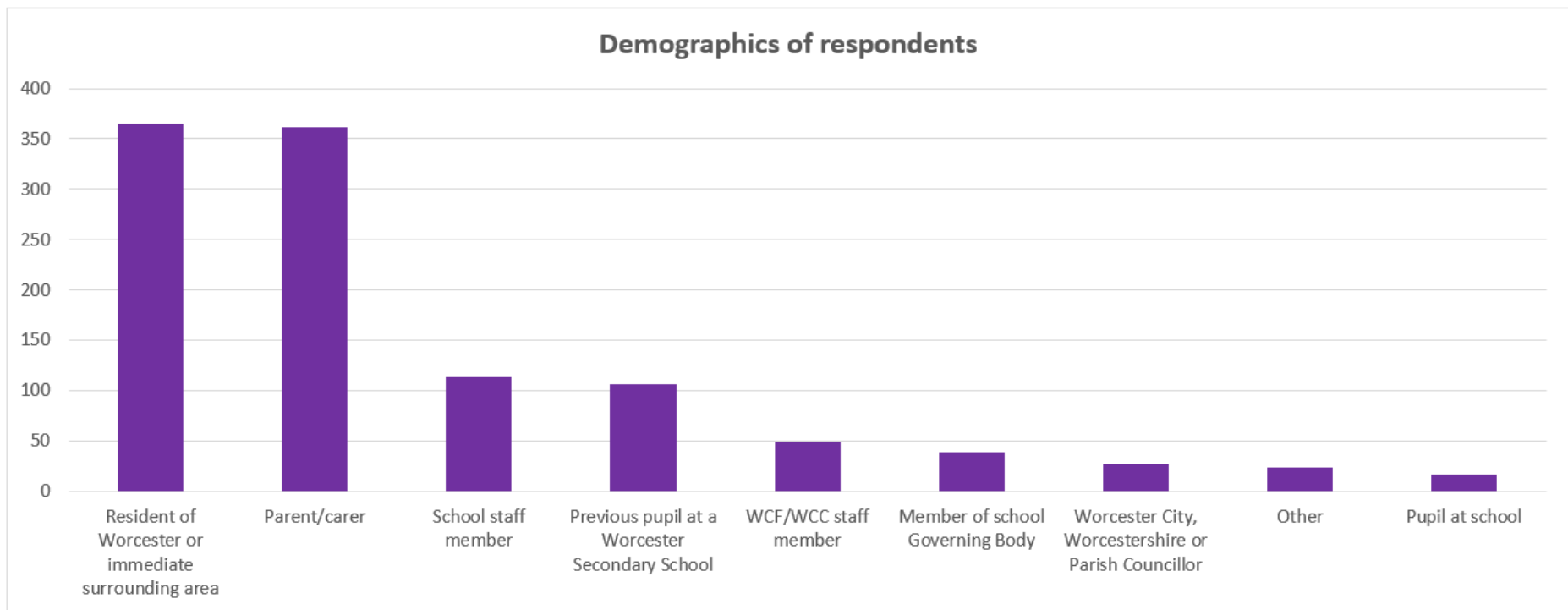
Overview

Demographics

The survey was shared via a number of different channels including:

- WCC website and Social media channels
- Emailed directly to schools, organisations and representative bodies
- Shared with the Worcestershire Viewpoint Panel
- Published in local media.

In total 595 responses were received; 61% of respondents were parents/carers, 21% were past or current pupils of Worcestershire schools, and 26% were current schools staff members or members of Governing Bodies.



420 respondents provided their postcode, this showed a fair distribution across Worcester City and surrounding areas. 6% were from the WR1 area, 16% from WR2, 36% from WR3 area, 21% were from the WR4 area, and 19% from WR5 area of Worcester.

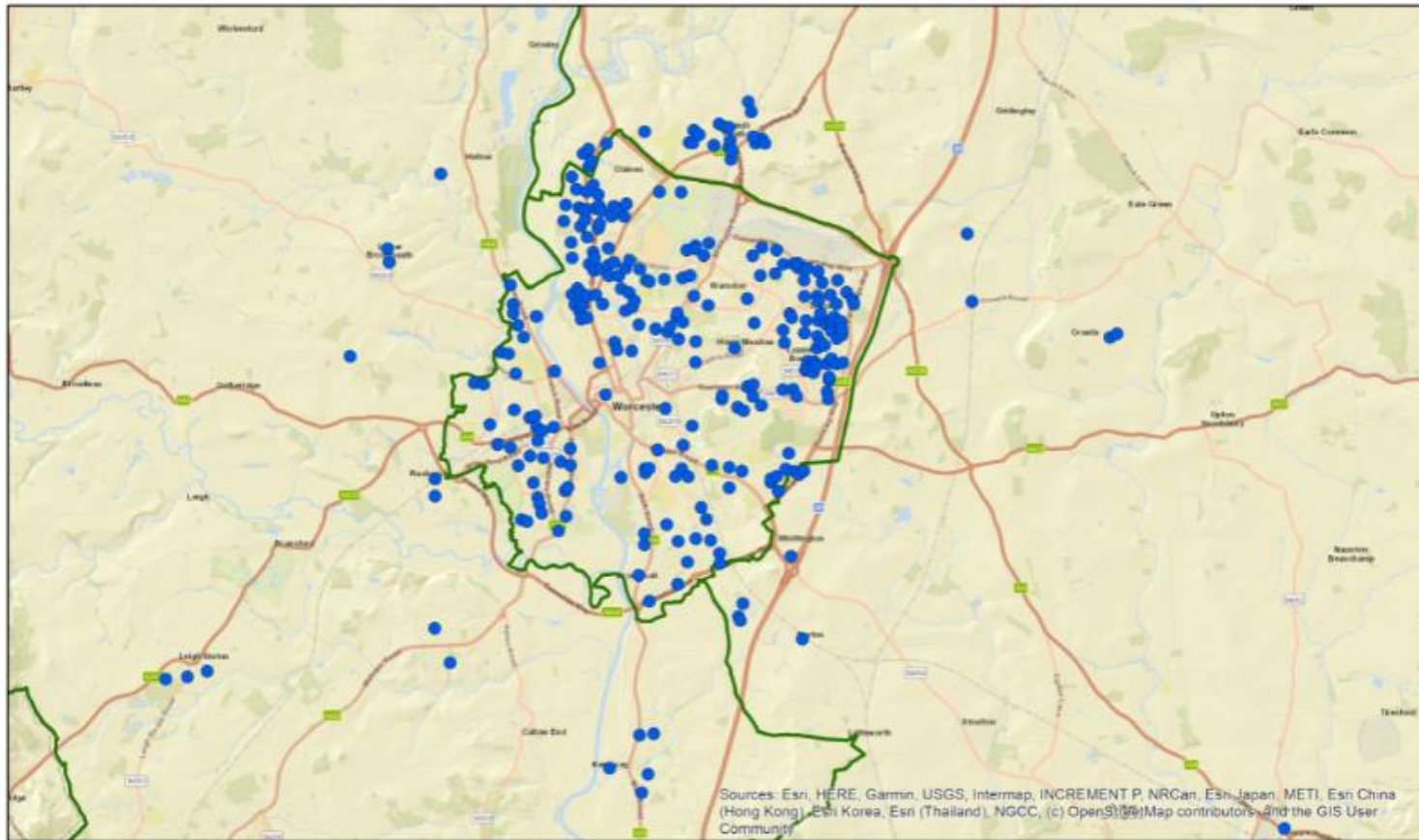
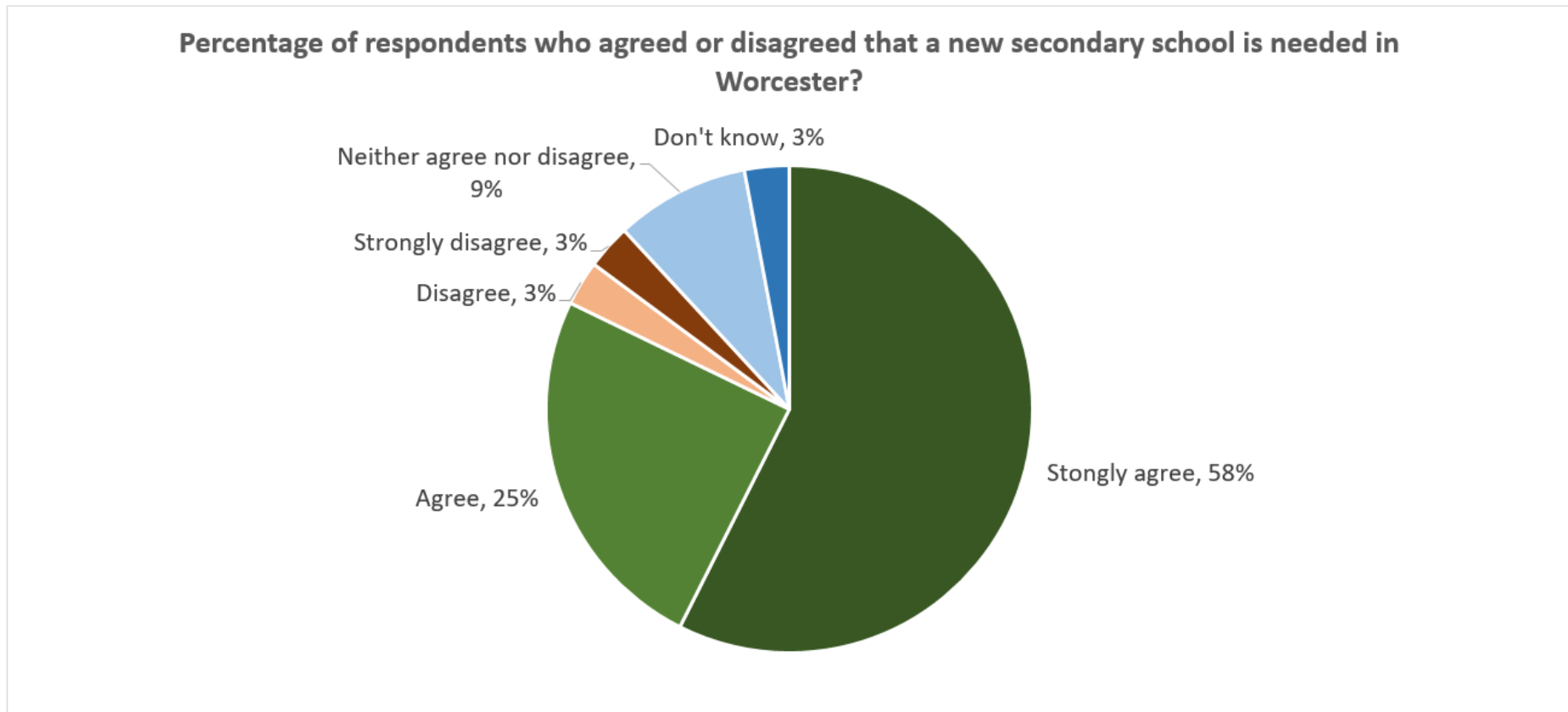


Figure 1 Map of respondents

Support for a new school

Most respondents agreed that a new secondary school is needed for Worcester. 83% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, just 6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, 9% neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% were unsure.



Key Outcomes

We asked respondents how important certain factors were in the delivery of a new secondary school. The top five aspects that were considered very important by respondents were that students feel safe at school; the head and senior staff provide strong leadership; students feel their mental health and wellbeing is well supported; students feel safe in the area around the school; and students make good academic progress.

Top five factors respondents considered to be 'very important' in a new secondary school

88%

Students feel safe at school

78%

Strong leadership from Head and Senior Staff

74%

Students feel their mental health and wellbeing is well supported

72%

Students feel safe in the area around the school

71%

Students make good academic progress

Values

Ensuring the wellbeing of pupils and staff came through very strongly as a priority for respondents when considering a new school. Of those factors we asked respondents to consider that would shape the values and principles of a new school the following were considered very important:

- Ensuring students feel safe and well supported
- Providing strong leadership and effective administration
- A focus on academic achievement
- Providing an education that created well rounded individuals
- Ensuring a strong behaviour policy

Less important factors were uniform policy and faith-based values.

We also asked respondents to provide further comments, many of which concerned ensuring inclusive values, a strong emphasis on pastoral care, emphasising mental health teaching and support and creating a school ethos for care, kindness and respect.

“School needs good leadership but focused on the right things such as supporting students and making them feel safe.”

“Promotion of Equality and Diversity. Relevant curriculum for future employment opportunities.”

“One of the primary causes of concern for parents sending their children to high school is bullying and fighting. It would good to have a school that researches the root causes of bullying and does whatever it can to stamp it out.”

“A culture of acceptance, mutual respect and ambition.”

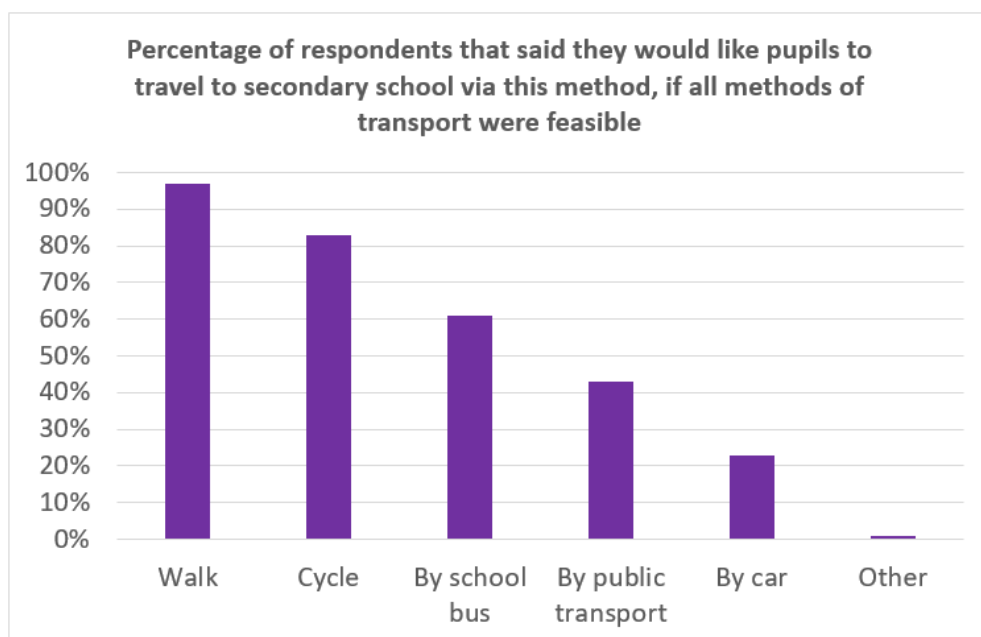
Location

Enabling pupils to travel to the school via active travel routes was extremely important for respondents. They also noted the importance of ensuring sufficient space to enable drop off/pick up where needed, but that car use should be actively discouraged as much as possible.

As a result, guaranteeing good community links was mentioned by a number of respondents, as well as ensuring that the position of the new school consider current traffic congestion. Ensuring the school was located within the local community of the pupils it will serve was also noted as important.

A number of respondents also commented suggestions for the location of the new school:

- 37 respondents identified North Worcester (Fernhill Heath, Claines and Northwick)
- 16 identified Warndon & the Berkeleys as a high need.



“The school surroundings need to be considered, good access to sports pitches and natural areas round the school to aid with pupil’s mental health”

“Consideration should be given to the location of the school, where there is a good infrastructure to feed and support the school”

“Please could it be placed in an area accessible by bikes, walking and buses with bike storage provided for pupils and staff to get cars off the local roads and so reduce pollution and keep everyone safe”

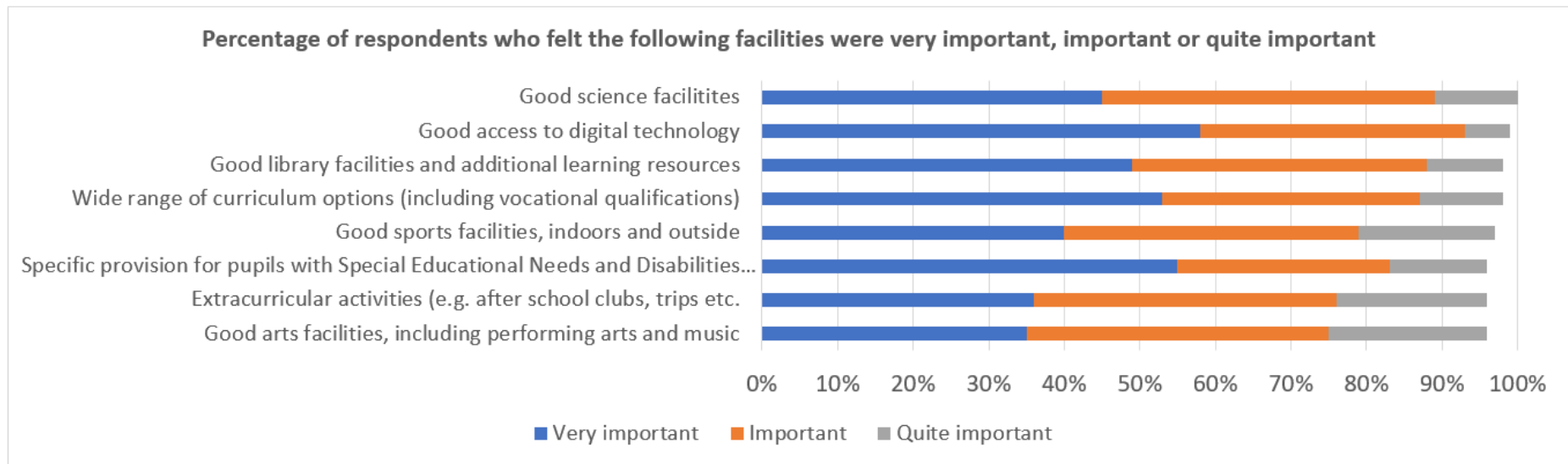
Facilities

Overall, respondents felt that good facilities at the school were particularly important, with the most notably being:

- Access to digital technology
- Good science facilities
- A good library / quiet work space
- Enabling a wide range of curriculum options.

Specific provision for pupils with SEND was also felt to be important or very important for over 80% of respondents.

It was also considered critical by respondents that facilities can be used by the community outside of school hours, in particular sports facilities. Many commenters felt that this would provide opportunities to improve community integration and ensure the optimum use of new services.



“The school should be at the heart of its community and have rich and varied provision for the students and the surrounding community within the school day and beyond”

“This is a wonderful way of sharing facilities with the wider community and then in turn raising much needed funds for schools from rent”

Admissions

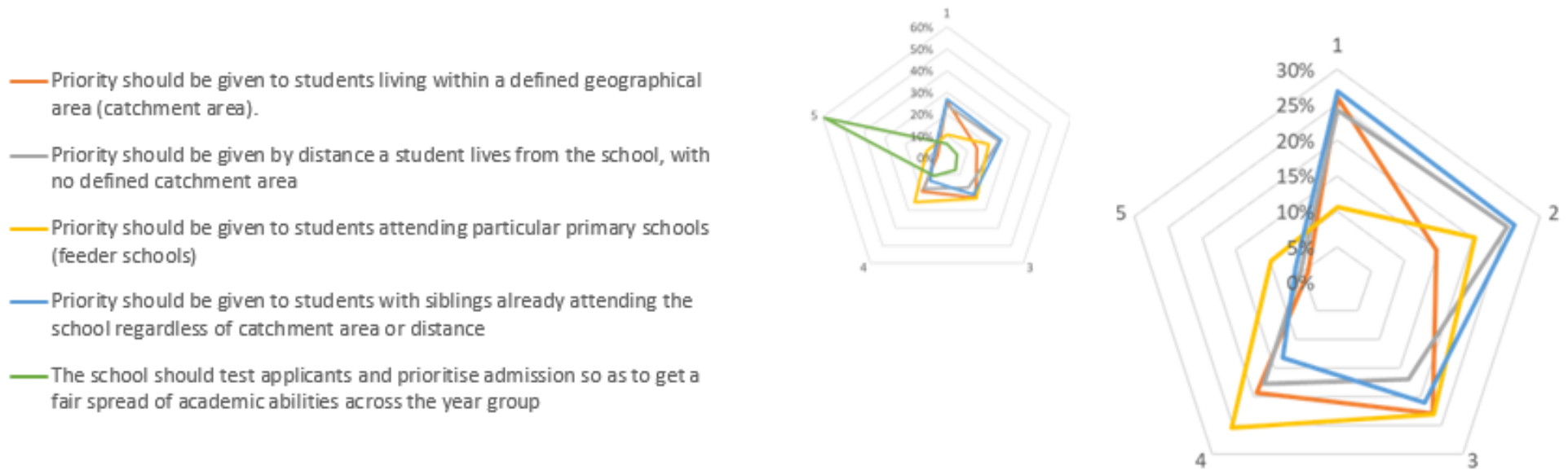
Respondents were asked to rank how priority should be given in admission to a new secondary school:

- 27% of respondents said that first priority should be given to students with siblings already attending the school
- 26% said priority should firstly be given to students living within a defined catchment area
- 24% said first priority should be determined by distance from home to the school.

Respondents also felt that following this, admissions should also prioritise attendance at particular feeder schools.

Most Respondents felt that a test to prioritise admissions as to get a fair spread of academic abilities across the year groups should be prioritised lowest. The below graph shows the distribution of respondents who said each factor should be given 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th priority.

Distribution of how respondents felt each factor should be prioritised in admissions for a new secondary school, with respondents answering 1 when this should be the first priority, 2 if this factor should be the second priority and so on



Build

Through the engagement exercise, additional comments were received in regard to the build of the new secondary school. In particular, 25 respondents left comments in regard to the need to focus on energy efficient, sustainable building methods and carbon neutrality.

Comments were also received on the need to ensure buildings are adaptable to future need and changes in education practice. Respondents also commenting showing a preference to seek local materials and use of local companies.

“Want a functional robust school with good but not expensive energy credentials and an internal space you can feel good about.”

“Access to the school needs to be carefully considered especially for traffic issues either end of the day and how this impacts on local residents. The school surroundings should include natural areas / outdoor learning to aid with pupils’ well being. The school should be built to produce its own energy, use SUDS and rain water capture.”

“The school should aim for 100% of students travelling to school by active travel. Staff should also be enabled, encouraged, and incentivised to avoid private motor vehicles. The school should also be built to the highest sustainability standards, and be aiming for a net zero carbon institution.”

“Should be built to be as environmentally friendly as possible including integral facilities for as much recycling / energy efficient processes as is feasible”

'You said, We Will'

The 595 responses and 500 comments provided as part of this engagement exercise have provided guidance to shape the specification and proposals for a new secondary school. The below outlines the key themes presented and how these will be integrated into the design, build, and specification for the new secondary school.

Some matters such as the values, leadership and operation of the school will be in the control of the chosen Academy Trust for the school. Wherever a requirement has been identified in these areas, we will include our expectations for this area within the specification for the Academy competition, and score applicants against this standard within the application.

| Theme | Comments | What we will do |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Values | Students feel safe in and around the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on strong behavior policy in the specification for the academy sponsor and a requirement for any academy candidate to provide information and evidence of such. • Ensuring the school is built with safeguarding best practice. |
| Leadership | Strong leadership from Head and Senior Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A requirement for the academy sponsor to provide evidence of strong leadership. • A requirement for the school to offer ongoing development opportunities for all staff. • A requirement for the school to have a dedicated head of school. |
| Values | A focus on the wellbeing and mental health of students and staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A requirement for the academy trust to show their approach to wellbeing and mental health as part of their application. • A requirement for the school to offer ongoing development opportunities for all staff. • Integration of small teaching spaces and quiet zones within the school where possible. • Prioritise locations that offer access to green space. • Clear processes in place to provide early help and social care for pupils and staff. |
| Education | Students make good academic progress and have access to a variety of curriculum options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of an academy sponsor will prioritise those that show how educational offer/ curriculum ensures excellent outcomes and high quality of teaching and learning to ensure all pupils can succeed. • A requirement for academy applicants to provide evidence and details of their approach to meeting the needs of all children and ensure accessibility for all pupils to the curriculum and school life, including Looked After Children, Young Carers, and those with Special Educational Needs. |
| Values | An ethos and practice of inclusivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chosen sponsor must have a strong ethos and evidenced practice to ensure inclusivity of all pupils, and ensure all pupils are able to access the curriculum and quality first teaching (QFT) and high-quality teaching, in particular making appropriate adjustments for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), vulnerable learners and Looked after Children. |



| Theme | Comments | What we will do |
|-------------------|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The chosen academy sponsor will be expected to build an ongoing, holistic understanding of their pupils and their needs, and facilities will reflect an ethos of inclusivity. The school will have a strong IT Policy that seeks to utilise technology to support inclusivity and accessibility for all pupils, including children with SEND including dyslexia, hearing impairment etc. The management of other facilities such as bathrooms and staff facilities must link to the inclusivity policy of the school, in particular with regard to gender and self-identity. The school will work closely with the Local Authority and other organisations to ensure all pupils receive the correct support to ensure full access to the curriculum and school life. The school should commit to staff continuing professional development (CPD) and training to upskill senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and other school staff in understanding the requirements to meet the individual needs of pupils. |
| Leadership | A strong bullying policy which focuses on the root cause of bullying that is consistently applied | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school must have a strong behaviour policy and an academy sponsor who can evidence the effectiveness of the policy. The school should have a behaviour policy that does not discriminate against pupils with SEND or vulnerable learners. The school will be proactive in preventing exclusions and will following the Graduated Response to preventing exclusions in mainstream schools. |
| Location | The location of the school should be within the local community of the pupils who will be accessing the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The search criteria for a site for the new secondary school has been restricted the East of Worcester City, which has seen the most significant levels of housing growth and which has the lowest percentages of pupils receiving a place at one of their preferred secondary schools. The search criteria have been restricted to within walking distance of houses in Worcester City. |
| Location | The location of the school should consider existing traffic congestion and ensure active travel routes are in place for pupils from the point of school opening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The search criteria have been restricted to sites that already have existing strong links to residential areas through walking and cycling routes. When possible, the site will be easily accessible by existing bus travel routes. A Traffic Impact Assessment will be carried out by the Council as part of the planning process for the build project. The appointed sponsor will be required to develop a School Travel Plan encouraging safe travel to school which promotes walking and cycling. The use of cars for students will be discouraged through the design of the school and through active management by the school. The minimum parking requirements of 1 parking space per full time member of staff will be use for the school site. |



| Theme | Comments | What we will do |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Facilities | Pupils should have access to sports pitches and natural areas to support mental health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The location of the school will prioritise being close to natural spaces and where possible utilise outside space for teaching and school life. |
| Facilities | The school should have good facilities, in particular digital technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An emphasis on identifying an academy sponsor with experience of using innovative digital technologies to support learning, particularly to support children with special needs or disability to access the curriculum. |
| Facilities | Facilities should be mindful of inclusivity and ensure specific facilities are available for pupils with special education needs and disability requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school will have a specialist 12 place mainstream autism base on site to ensure children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder can integrate into a mainstream setting alongside ensuring they have a dedicated space for their learning and wellbeing needs to be met throughout the school day. The management of other facilities such as bathrooms and staff facilities must link to the inclusivity policy of the school. |
| Facilities | Facilities should be accessible for community use out of school hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The design of the school will take account of after school use of facilities, particularly sports facilities. The chosen academy sponsor will be expected to agree community use and ensure wherever possible facilities can be used outside of school hours by the community. |
| Admissions | Admission to the school should prioritise siblings of pupils at the school, distance to the school, and catchment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be an expectation that the academy sponsor will be mindful of this when determining their admissions requirements. |
| Build | The build of the new school should focus on energy efficient building methods and an aim towards carbon neutrality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum build criteria will be created which is in line with the Worcestershire County Council aims towards sustainability and energy efficiency. |
| Build | Buildings should be adaptable to future need and changes in education practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School will initially be built as a 120 place per year secondary school in line with current need, but will be designed with core facilities of up to 240 pupils per year to enable future expansion in keeping with the initial build and timed alongside the growth in population of Worcester City. |
| Build | Local materials and construction companies should be used where possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local companies will be prioritised where possible through the procurement process. |

